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Bay in the Balance

It is no stretch to suggest that Duxbury Bay is our most indispensable natural resource. It is our crown jewel, and we are here, most of us, because it is here. "It's like an old friend," waxed one native. "When I stand at the bridge and look across at the Gurnet and Manomet I know I'm home."

We've all had thoughts like that, quiet musings of pristine waters that have always been an old friend. We can spend a lot of time rhapsodizing about the pleasures of Duxbury Bay. But we don't spend enough time thinking about the other side, about the ills of civilization — be it pollution, erosion, over fishing, the ever expanding boat traffic, or the proliferation of piers — that are inexorably encroaching upon the bay, putting far too much pressure on a resource that has finite limits. Yet it is the other side, the ills of civilization, that we must think about; if we don't, we will lose a wonder we can never get back. It is a worry.

And it is our worrying about Duxbury Bay and its future that prompted us to commission a special 10-part series which begins in this week's Clipper. The series is called, "Bay in the Balance" and was researched and written by Debora Babin Katz, a Duxbury resident who has spent months studying the bay from every conceivable angle. She is an indefatigable researcher. She has interviewed dozens of experts, poured through tomes of reports and parsed too many statistics to fully contemplate. She has become a walking encyclopedia of the bay. Yet we suspect that even she will acknowledge there is much more much to learn. One can never know too much about Duxbury Bay.

We, of course, are not the first to be concerned about the future of the bay. For years, probably for centuries, there have been groups and individuals who worked hard and successfully to protect the bay from polluters and over zealous developers. Their work is part of our heritage and deserves our gratitude. And as we write this, two separate town committees are in the process of studying the bay and its environs with special emphasis on the problems of congestion. The fact that these two committees exist at all should be sufficient acknowledgement that the bay is beset with problems. As the present day protectors of our most vital resource, we need to identify those problems and solve them as best we can.